

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
November 2-3, 2018  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Final Report: 2018 Program Committee**  
(Prepared by Co-Chairs Debbie Bahn, Dorothy Davis, and Meg Tuomala)

2018 Program Committee Members: Debbie Bahn (co-chair), Barrye Brown, Cathi Carmack, Dorothy Davis (co-chair), Kate Donovan, Matt Francis, Brad Houston, Christina Orozco, Arian Ravanbakhsh, Dennis Riley, Sara Seltzer, Kris Stenson, Mitch Toda, Meg Tuomala (co-chair).

**Conference Theme, Call for Proposals, and Enhanced Communications**

After brainstorming and discussion at our in-person meeting in Portland and follow-up discussion online, the 2018 Program Committee selected “Promoting Transparency” as the Joint Annual Meeting theme. We felt that this theme worked well for all organizations, and that it was timely given the current political climate. The CFP was published on the SAA website in September 2017 and included a link to the now ubiquitous collaboration Google spreadsheet.

During our in-person meeting in Portland, the Committee discussed feedback that the work of the Program Committee—especially the session evaluation and selection process—could be “opened up” and made more transparent to SAA members. We worked with SAA President Tanya Zanish-Belcher to draft a series of posts for her “Off the Record” blog. Two posts were written by the Program Committee addressing proposal evaluation and selection, [What We’re Looking For: Taking Your Session Proposal from Good to Excellent](#) (posted in October 2017) and [2018 Program Committee Update: What Happens During the January Meeting?](#) (posted in January 2018). We also drafted an article for *Archival Outlook* that was included in the Winter 2018 issue. We feel that these posts were helpful in elucidating our process and would encourage future Program Committees to continue the trend of more communication to SAA membership.

Following selection and decline notifications, the committee co-chairs drafted feedback letters that were sent to the proposers that requested them. They included real feedback from the Committee that was heard and noted during the in-person meeting. This process is helpful to future submitters and should be continued.

In August, SAA hosted a “Top 10 Tips for First Timers” webinar. Program Committee member Arian Ravanbakhsh, SNAP Section Chair Katie Rojas, and SAA Governance

Manager Felicia Owens presented quick tips and tricks to help first-time attendees make the most of the Joint Annual Meeting. They covered everything from remembering to bring a water bottle and comfortable shoes to highlighting the many unique events happening in DC. Seventy-five individuals registered for the event, and forty registrants watched the webinar live.

## **Education Sessions and Posters**

2018 was a Joint Annual Meeting attended by members of SAA, NAGARA, and CoSA. The membership of the Committee included co-chairs and representatives from all three organizations, ensuring that our program included content relevant to members of SAA, NAGARA, and CoSA.

Having spent November and December reading, evaluating, and scoring the 216 session proposals submitted, the Program Committee met in-person in Chicago to select education and poster sessions on January 8-10, 2018. The Committee ultimately selected 72 education sessions and 13 posters, as well as a handful of alternates. As in recent years, the Committee decided to leave a few of the available slots open for pop-up session proposals. Pop-up sessions were selected by SAA, CoSA, and NAGARA members by an online vote in June. We also left room for a student program session, which was later selected by the Student Program Subcommittee chaired by Brad Houston.

This year, we designed a Records Management track for the education sessions, i.e., there was at least one RM-focused session during all blocks. Special thanks to the four NAGARA Committee members for their RM subject matter expertise and feedback during our scheduling process, ensuring that we had a strong RM track for annual meeting attendees.

There were several factors that made the selection a success. First is the evaluation and ranking website sent to Committee members in November, and the spreadsheet that is distributed in advance of the meeting. Having all the data at hand allows the Committee to effectively and efficiently work through the selection process. The spreadsheet has multiple data points that allow the Committee to evaluate and discuss session rankings, subject and proposer diversity, and thematic coherence.

Additionally, the SAA staff is instrumental in ensuring the meeting runs smoothly, is focused, and that everyone has a place to sleep and is well fed. They provide valuable advice, insight, and feedback during Committee deliberations. They also take notes during discussion that prove to be immensely helpful when declined proposers request feedback. Special thanks to Nancy Beaumont, Felicia Owens, Matt Black, and Carlos Salgado, as well as NAGARA's Johnny Hadlock and CoSA's Barbara Teague for their expertise and support.

2019 Program Committee Co-chairs Joyce Gabiola and Rachel Winston attended the meeting to observe the process. 2018 Co-chair Meg Tuomala served on the 2017 Program

Committee and acknowledges that is very helpful to have some insight and experience with the process to ensure that each program committee meeting runs as smoothly as possible. We recommend that future chairs should have either served on the previous year's Committee or be invited to attend the January meeting.

### **Observations and Feedback**

Feedback delivered in-person during the Joint Annual Meeting to various Committee members was positive. Most sessions were very well attended, with some rooms being rather small for such a large conference. [The 2018 Evaluation Form Summary and Report](#) reflected positive feedback, with 88% of attendees being “extremely satisfied” or “moderately satisfied” with the meeting. The detailed report with comments should be sent to the 2019 co-chairs for their review.

There seemed to be confusion around slide and presentation submission via the Sched app. Most folks seemed not to know that this was available to them or had trouble submitting their content. This should be better publicized and communicated to session presenters in advance of the meeting by either SAA staff or the Program Committee. It has the potential to be a great tool for both those who attended and those who are not able to attend the meeting. SAA should also consider how to save this content for future reference and use by the membership.

Program Committee members performed their support and logistical duties well during the meeting. There were minor AV issues that were all addressed in a timely manner. A special thanks goes to Matt Francis who was asked to deliver a paper when a speaker could not attend the Annual Meeting due to a family emergency. Matt responded with a yes-mindset and went above and beyond his Committee duties, delivering the paper during session 707! Another special thanks to Dorothy Davis, who stepped up as co-chair in January when Lisa Speer unexpectedly had to resign from the Committee. Their service is representative of the attitude of the entire Committee during the past year—a smart, talented, and dedicated group of folks who put together an excellent program for the 2018 Joint Annual Meeting.